

# Techniques for Teaching Adjectives and Four Classroom Activities

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## Introduction

To incorporate games and activities while introducing a topic to a classroom can be very motivating as they arouse interest and concentrate attention while giving the illusion that one is merely playing games. My teaching experiences reiterate the fact that these activities, if appropriately chosen, can be used to practice all the language skills; the productive skills i.e. speaking and writing, and the receptive skills - listening and reading. The aim of this paper is (1) to explicate few simple techniques to introduce the concept of the positive, comparative and superlative degrees and (2) to demonstrate four simple games and activities to make the concept explicit. These games will help the teacher to assess their students' level of awareness of the positive, comparative and superlative degrees and thus ensure if they have understood the topic completely.

## Level

Easy to medium

## Aim

To Introduce and explain the formation, uses and differences between the positive, comparative and superlative degrees.

## Notes

### (a). Positive Degree

Introduce the topic to the class by picking up real objects, example: a colorful book, a pencil box. Ask students, at random, to describe the objects, using many adjectives. Write the sentences on the board. Underline the adjectives with colored chalk.

## Examples

- It is a small pencil.
- This is a thick book.

Next, use flash cards of items of interest to children i.e. animals, dresses, trees, etc. and elicit as many sentences describing each flash card. Once again, the teacher writes the sentences on the board while underlining the adjectives with colored chalk.

## Examples

- The lion has sharp teeth.
- That is a beautiful dress.
- He is tall.

After the teacher has written a couple of sentences on the board, he/she should write the adjectives only, in a tabular form as shown below:

## Examples of Positive Degree

small	sharp	beautiful	thick	tall
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Now focusing on these adjectives the teacher may explain that the positive degree only describes nouns or pronouns. It shows the simple quality of an object without reference to any other.

**(b). Comparative Degree**

To introduce the comparative degree take a pair of real objects. Be sure that each object has different characteristics. For example two pencils of varying length. Before explaining the comparative degree, ask the students what adjectives can be used to compare or contrast the objects. This approach will evoke any knowledge the students already have about the topic. The teacher can show overhead transparencies or slides of a pair of animals or common objects. Let the students compare and contrast the pair.

**Examples**

- The elephant is *taller than* the horse.
- The shirt is *longer than* the shorts.

With the help of real objects and slides or overhead transparencies the students will eventually understand that when one thing is compared or contrasted with another in respect of a certain attribute we use a comparative degree. Thereafter the teacher may present a slide or overhead transparencies on the formation of the comparative degree (see: “Formation of Comparative and Superlative”).

**(c). Superlative Degree:**

To teach the superlative degree the teacher may pick up four or five real objects of the same kind. For example, four or five pencils of different length. Ask the students how they would differentiate between the pencils.

**Examples**

- This is a long pencil.
- This pencil is longer than that.
- This is the longest pencil.

Using a few flash cards showing different characteristics of common objects the teacher makes three sentences for three degrees of adjectives. The teacher may then show a list having the three degrees of adjectives in a tabular form.

## Formation of Comparative and Superlative

1. Most adjectives of one syllable and some of more than one syllable form the comparative by adding “-er” and the superlative by adding “-est” to the positive.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
bold	bolder	boldest
clever	cleverer	cleverest
deep	deeper	deepest
sweet	sweeter	sweetest

tall taller tallest

2. When the positive ends in “e”, add “-r” for the comparative and “-st” for the superlative.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
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able	abler	ablest
brave	braver	bravest
fine	finer	finest
simple	simpler	simplest
wise	wiser	wisest

3. When the positive ends in “y”, preceded by a consonant, the “y” is changed into “i” before adding “-er” for the comparative and “-est” for the superlative.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
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busy	busier	busiest
happy	happier	happiest
noisy	noisier	noisiest
pretty	prettier	prettiest
wealthy	wealthier	wealthiest

4. When the positive is a word of one syllable and ends in a single consonant, preceded by a short vowel, the consonant is doubled before adding “-er” for the comparative and “-est” for the superlative.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
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big	bigger	biggest
fat	fatter	fattest
hot	hotter	hottest
sad	sadder	saddest
thin	thinner	thinnest

5. Adjectives of more than two or more syllables form the comparative by using the adverb “more”, and form superlative by using

the adverb “most”.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
beautiful	more beautiful	most beautiful
courageous	more courageous	most courageous
difficult	more difficult	most difficult
satisfactory	more satisfactory	most satisfactory
useful	more useful	most useful

## Notes

- (a). Be careful, not to use “more” along with a Comparative formed with “er”, and “most” along with a Superlative formed with “est”, i.e. do not write ‘more heavier’ or ‘most heaviest’.
- (b). The “as.....as” construction is used to make a comparison expressing equality.

## Example

- She is as intelligent as her mother.

6. **Irregular Comparison:** Some adjectives are compared irregularly, i.e. their comparatives and superlatives are not formed from the positive.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Comparative</u>	<u>Superlative</u>
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
far	farther	farthest
many	more	most

Once the uses, differences between and the formation of the three degrees are understood the teacher may then carry out the following activities to make the concepts explicitly clear. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the games according to the age, background and level of their students.

## Activity I: “Tick Tick Tick”

### Level

Easy to medium

### Aim

writing, grammar (Positive, Comparative and Superlative), reading aloud, listening

## Notes

Split the class into small groups of four each. Give each group a sheet of paper. Write ten sentences on the board which they are required to complete by adding either the positive, comparative or superlative degree of adjective given at the end of each sentence. Set a time limit. At the end of time limit the teacher gives the answers. The group that gets the most answers correct wins. Let the rest of the class clap for them.

## Sample Questions

happy , tall , good , strong , fat, cold, <del>heavy</del> , thin, fast, old, large.
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## Example

- Lead is the heaviest of all the metals. (Superlative degree)

1. This coffee is very weak. I prefer it a bit \_\_\_\_\_ . ( )
2. The Wabash River flows \_\_\_\_\_ in spring than in fall. ( )
3. Bill has bought a \_\_\_\_\_ car. ( )
4. The giraffe is \_\_\_\_\_ than the man. ( )
5. Paul is the \_\_\_\_\_ boy in our class. ( )
6. Who is your \_\_\_\_\_ singer? ( )
7. Sam is \_\_\_\_\_ than Tom. ( )
8. You look \_\_\_\_\_. Have you lost weight? ( )
9. The children look \_\_\_\_\_ today. ( )
10. It's \_\_\_\_\_ today than yesterday. ( )

## Comments

**This simple activity encourages student bonding and cooperation. Moreover it helps them to learn the grammar form by interaction. It enhances both the productive and receptive skills.**

## Activity II : “Tug Of Words”

### Level

Medium to difficult

### Aim

speaking, listening, writing grammar, reading aloud

## Notes

Split the class into team ‘A’ and team ‘B’. Let each team elect its leader. Give a sheet of paper to each team. Each team collectively forms a questionnaire of ten fill-in-the-blank statements on general topics, (e.g. weather, games) which is to be solved by the other team. The blank spaces are to be filled by the correct form of the adjective given in parenthesis at the end of each statement. Once the two teams have written their sentences the teacher draws two columns on the board. He/she writes team ‘A’ and team ‘B’ in each column. Now the leader of team ‘A’ reads each sentence along with the word with which the sentence is to be completed. Each

student of team 'B', by turn, has to complete the sentences. Award one point for each correct answer. In case a student fails to give the answer the team as a whole is given one chance to complete the sentence. In case it succeeds, award half a point to the team. The teacher writes the points after each round. When team 'A' has asked all its questions, team 'B' is asked to present its sentences. At the end of the game, the teacher totals the points. The team that scores more wins. Let all clap for the winning team.

## Sample Sentences

Complete the sentences by choosing the correct form of the words given in brackets.

1. Australia is \_\_\_\_\_ island in the world. (large, larger, the largest)
2. The class test was \_\_\_\_\_ than we had expected. (easy, easier, the easiest)
3. The elephant has \_\_\_\_\_ trunk. (a long, a longer, the longest)
4. Kilimanjaro in Africa is \_\_\_\_\_ than Mount Blanc in Europe . (tall, taller, the tallest)
5. King Solomon was \_\_\_\_\_ of the kings we have ever heard of. (wise, wiser, the wisest)

## Comments

**This activity stimulates both the imagination and self expression. In addition, it increases proficiency in all the four language skills. The students are personally involved. The class appears lively, demanding and interesting.**

## Activity III : “Count the Beads”

### Level

All levels

### Aim

Reading aloud, listening, grammar, reading for specific information, pronunciation

### Notes

Give a sheet of paper to each student. Ask them to write their names on the sheet and to draw three columns for the Positive, Comparative and Superlative degrees. Next, let a student read a short text loudly for the class. Ask the students to listen carefully and write words having the Positive, Comparative and Superlative degree in their respective columns. Let the class listen to the passage a second time if necessary. At the end, the teacher collects the sheets and redistributes them, randomly, amongst the students. The teacher then draws three columns on the board and writes the answers. Let the students mark the answer sheets by giving one point for each correct answer. The student who scores the highest wins.

### Comment

This activity, besides being fun, helps the teacher to monitor the progress of the class easily. This activity integrates a numbers of skills thus allowing a practice of language. As this activity involves all levels, the text must be chosen accordingly.

For teachers who have a large number of students in their classes, this technique of correction has three advantages. It (1) allows the teachers to spare some more time for their students and (2) when students mark for themselves they learn faster. In addition, it (3) enhances the qualities of honesty, sincerity and credibility, which are the key factors while marking.

## Activity IV “The Picture Game”

### Level

All levels

## Aims

Writing, grammar (structure, spellings)

## Notes

Make photocopies of a picture containing three different animals or objects; e.g. a picture showing a cow, a rhinoceros and an elephant. Give each student a copy of this picture along with a sheet of paper. Ask the students to write their names on the sheet and make two sentences each for the positive, comparative and superlative degree by comparing and contrasting the animals or objects. They are also required to write the degree of adjective in a parenthesis at the end of each sentence. Let the students work individually. Set a time limit. At the end of the time limit, the sheets are collected and marked by the teacher.

## Sample Sentences

1. A cow is a large animal. (positive degree)
2. The elephant has a long trunk. (positive degree)
3. A rhinoceroses is larger than a cow. (comparative degree)
4. A cow has thinner legs than a rhinoceroses. (comparative degree)
5. An elephant is the largest of all these animals. (superlative degree)
6. The cow has the longest tail. (superlative degree)

## Comments

This activity helps the teacher to know the students' understanding of the positive, comparative and superlative degrees, spellings and grammatical structure. Besides, it helps the students to think creatively. Finally, it will ensure that they have understood the topic completely.

## Conclusion

Properly selected games and activities are significantly helpful as they attract the students' attention immediately. And, at the same time allow them to practice language skills. This paper has presented some techniques and sample games that I have found particularly useful and enjoyable for my students. These techniques and activities may require more than one session but the results are worth while as the correct use of the positive, comparative and superlative degrees is a key ingredient when students are learning how to express their opinion or making comparative judgments.

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